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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [KBIO](#) [HU](#)  
SUBJECT: SAY ANYTHING: THE PM'S MIXED MESSAGES

Classified By: P/E COUNSELOR ERIC V. GAUDIOSI; REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

FROM ONE ACCORDING TO HIS ABILITIES; TO EACH ACCORDING TO  
THEIR INTERESTS

¶1. (C) Prime Minister Gyurcsany continues to calibrate his messages at the expense of his credibility. Throughout the past weeks, he has sought to assure the public that Hungary's economy has weathered a "foreign attack" and will maintain strict "social solidarity." At the same time, he has worked to signal to the diplomatic and business community that 2009 will mark a "return to reform."

¶2. (C) He has ended up largely mistrusted by both sides, and his recent rebound in the polls is already receding as unemployment continues to rise. As former Minister of Economy and SzDSz Parliamentary Faction Leader Janos Koka observes, the Prime Minister has been "an inconstant reformer" whose statements "cannot be taken at face value." "The Prime Minister's conviction is that changes are necessary," SzDSz MP Matyas Eorsi concludes, "but his commitment is to staying in power."

¶3. (C) Even within the MSzP's ranks, many are inclined to agree. Indeed, some within the party have concluded that Gyurcsany is a mixed messenger. Sources in and out of government tell us that few in the small ) and constantly changing - circle around the PM can tell what he really believes.

¶4. (C) It may well be, one contact suggests, that the PM really does believe whatever he says ( when he is saying it. Over the course of his mandate, Gyurcsany has generated countless policy initiatives. But he has been unable to count on public or Parliamentary support. As one staffer confides, "the PM can convince himself ( but not anyone else."

A CIRCULAR FIRING SQUAD

¶5. (C) As a result, Gyurcsany remains trapped in a crossfire between the left and the right. Often denounced as a Communist by some, he is clearly regarded with suspicion by the Old Guard within the Socialist Party. Despite his marriage to a woman whose ancestry is often described as "half Bulgarian and all Communist," Gyurcsany is still seen by many as "too modern" and is often described by other Socialists as "a Free Democrat at heart." His status as one of the hundred richest Hungarians is also often a liability in a party which relies increasingly on pensioners and the unemployed. At the same time, it has given him very little in common with the investors who fault his government's policies for the country's economic straits. The Prime Minister's impromptu remarks regarding "the death of bankers' capitalism" haven't helped either.

¶6. (C) For the opposition, Gyurcsany can do no right. Though his tactics have changed ) and will doubtless change

again - FIDESZ leader Viktor Orban's principal goal of removing Gyurcsany has remained constant. Toward that end, we expect that some FIDESZ MPs, including Defense and Law Enforcement Committee Chair Janos Lazar, will continue to cite the prospect of a "Weimar Hungary" as a real threat. Others, meanwhile, will still cast Gyurcsany's "police tactics" as proof of his intention to rule "by lies and by force." Given the depth of the antipathy toward Gyurcsany by many on the right, we suspect some will have no problem believing that he is both too weak and too strong.

THOROUGHLY MODERN FERI

17. (C) Comment: In a country which designates certain domestic products as "Hungaricum" and where the opposition party emphasizes the need for "Magyarizmus," the Prime Minister remains curiously at odds with the national stereotype. Moody but not morose, intelligent but not intellectual, Gyurcsany projects enthusiasm ) even impulsiveness - to an audience which values introspection to the point of inaction. He is, as one contact observed, "a jogger and a blogger in a country which smokes and recites epic poetry." As the parties move quickly toward "campaign mode" in preparation for the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections, the PM will be under increasing pressure to please all the people ... if only rhetorically. End Comment.

Foley